

**COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT REFORM**  
**CONGRESSMAN TOM DAVIS, CHAIRMAN**



**NEWS RELEASE**

**For Immediate Release**  
**October 29, 2003**

**Contact: David Marin**  
**(202) 225-5074**

**Davis To Review INS Contracting Practices**  
***Letter to Ridge Outlines Concerns***

**Washington, D.C.** – House Government Reform Committee Chairman Tom Davis (R-VA) sent a letter to Homeland Security Secretary (DHS) Tom Ridge announcing that the committee intends to begin a review of DHS procurement operations, with a particular focus on needed improvements to legacy INS contracting functions. The letter comes on the heels of a General Accounting Office report, requested by Davis, finding weaknesses in both the infrastructure of contracting activities of the legacy Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) as well as concerns regarding the practices and procedures used by the contracting offices.

*A copy of the letter follows:*

October 28, 2003

The Honorable Tom Ridge  
Secretary  
Department of Homeland Security  
Washington, D.C. 20528

Dear Mr. Secretary:

I want to take this opportunity to thank you and your team for the efforts you have made since the creation of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS). The daunting task of quickly integrating over twenty agencies into one couldn't be more critical in today's threat environment. The Committee on Government Reform also recognizes the difficult task of managing procurement activities within such a diverse range of agencies, and I applaud you for DHS's recent naming of a chief procurement officer to spearhead that challenge.

However, I continue to have concerns about procurement management deficiencies that existed prior to the creation of DHS, and I would like you to shed some light on the progress and future plans DHS has to improve those deficiencies. I am specifically referring to the findings in the General Accounting Office (GAO) report I requested, entitled *Contract Management: INS*

*Contracting Weaknesses Need Attention from the Department of Homeland Security (GAO-03-799).*

As you are no doubt aware, GAO found weaknesses in both the infrastructure of contracting activities of the legacy Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) as well as concerns regarding the practices and procedures used by the contracting offices. GAO stated that procurement managers were at such a low level in the overall management structure of legacy INS that they could not carry the leverage required to ensure that contracting was being conducted in accordance with the Federal Acquisition Regulation. In addition, GAO found that legacy INS contracting offices did not utilize cross-functional teams and current information systems do not permit for agency-wide awareness of spending practices. Contracting officer recruiting, retention, and training were also major concerns for GAO. While reviewing contracting practices and procedures, GAO noted that a lack of advanced planning in the procurement process limited opportunities for full and open competition and noted that contractor performance monitoring was poor in some cases.

In accordance with our oversight obligations, this letter is to inform you that the Committee intends to begin a review of DHS procurement operations, with a particular focus on the improvements to legacy INS contracting functions. Please provide the following information to the Committee by Wednesday, November 12, 2003:

1. A written overview of DHS's actions to improve procurement functions for legacy INS, including:
  - a. Plans for enhancing information sharing within legacy INS activities as well as information sharing between other legacy agencies within DHS for procurement improvement; and
  - b. A discussion of the Department plans to implement GAO recommendations such as the establishment of cross-functional acquisition teams and the gathering of information to obtain strategic knowledge of spending behavior across the Department.
2. A written overview of the improvements to contracting workforce issues for DHS, and for legacy INS in particular, including:
  - a. A status report and timeline for the elimination of collateral duty contracting officers;
  - b. Current activities and future plans for the recruitment and retention of contracting officers; and
  - c. A description of the role of the director of acquisition workforce (including the number of staff assigned to the office), including the placement of the position in the Department's organization chart.
3. A written overview of the planned improvements to contract management in ensuring that legacy INS program offices adequately monitor contractor performance. Please include a discussion of the role of DHS, including the role of the chief procurement officer, in current and planned improvements.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

Tom Davis  
Chairman

